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Conflicts of National Security Interests in East Asia and the Pacific: At the Turn of the Twenty-First Century

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CONFLICTS OF NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS IN
EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC:
AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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Monterey, California
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Conflicts of National Security Interests in
East Asia and the Pacific:
At the Turn of the Twenty-First Century

Preface

We in the East Asian Area Studies division of the Department of National Security Affairs at the U. S. Naval Post-Graduate School, Monterey, California (NPS) are constantly challenged to put on record the results of our research on conflicts of national interests in the vast region of East Asia and the Pacific (EA/P).

Our faculty consists of experienced academicians or government servants and our student body is made up of active duty, mid-level officers of the navy, marines, army, air force or civilian agencies beginning the transition from successful careers in their particular communities to the broader world of political-military relations. On the average they have spent eight to ten years in the service of their country. Upon completion of their Master's degree, they will hopefully be assigned to stations where their knowledge can be put into practice. Officers from friendly countries frequently participate in our program, but our primary concerns are the security interests, objectives and strategies of the United States.

Our curriculum includes such core courses as international politics, international economics, national strategy and American foreign policy as well as the standard courses in area studies devoted to the history, culture,

laws and institutions of the nation-states located in each of the major regions of the world. The capstone of the curriculum is a seminar in which the student-officers, combining their experience and education, research a topic of relevance to the national interest. The subject matter of their theses constitutes the heart of this volume.

Upon my retirement from Stanford and San Jose State, in 1976 I joined the faculty at NPS. While continuing my connection with the Hoover Institution at Stanford, in 1985 I edited a conference report entitled National Security Interests in the Pacific Basin. Such specific problems were addressed as the effects on the Pacific Basin as the global confrontation between the superpowers, the stresses and strains between the two alliance systems, the conflicting demands of security and development in the less developed countries, the relationships between foreign policy and domestic politics, the escalating costs of national defense, and efforts to preserve stability and create conditions for progress in east Asia and the Western Pacific. The conference was structured to probe the two main sources of insecurity in the Pacific Basin -- those spillovers from superpower confrontation elsewhere on the globe and those rooted in local and regional conflicts.

In the aftermath of Tienanmen and the breaching of the Berlin wall in 1989, it was evident that the basic assumptions of the Cold War in Europe and Asia would have to be reexamined. The findings of the conference in 1985 were anachronistic. Each passing year brought significant changes in the development of American security policies and in the strategic environment of East Asia and the Pacific. Our basic research program at NPS was therefore

refashioned to focus on the new but ever-changing situation. The time is now opportune to offer this integration of our individual studies.

This book is designed primarily for all who are concerned with conflicts of security interests in the EA/P region but especially for the 100,000 men and women on active duty who may have been away from Asia for some time or who are assigned to the region for the first time. It is intended to be a link between students of policy and those actively engaged in its implementation.

In our research, we have profited from the advice and guidance of Admiral Thomas Mercer, the Superintendent of NPS and Captain Gregory A. Bushnell, his Chief Executive Officer. We have derived immense benefit from the publications of our sister institutions -- the National Defense University and the respective War Colleges of the Army, Navy and the Air Force. Likewise, we owe a debt of gratitude to our colleagues in the Department of National Security Affairs for their unfailing cooperation. We want also to express our special thanks to diplomats and political-military officials -- all the way from Washington to Honolulu to Tokyo, Yokosuka, Seoul, Beijing, Manila, Jakarta, Singapore, Sembawan, Vientiane, Phnom Penh, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City -- who have been most generous with their time and counsel.

Entirely aware of our limitations, we shall feel amply rewarded if even some of our personnel on active duty find our study useful and if succeeding generations of students will keep it up to date. In the course of our research

and discussions at NPS, no use was ever made in any way of classified material. We have relied entirely on open sources. We express ourselves entirely as private citizens, without any responsibility whatever for any of our thoughts or statements to be attributed to any person or office in government.

Monterey, California

June, 1995

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC: AT THE TURN OF TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Introduction.

With Korea, Vietnam and the Gulf War as bloody memories of the past, East Asia and the Pacific enters a new era of international relations with the turn to the 21st Century. The entire region, and the rest of the world, breathes more freely because the cold war in its passing has taken with it the imminent danger of a nuclear holocaust. Never has the time been more propitious for a reexamination of conflicts of national security interests in East Asia, with special attention to the role of the United States. It is the purpose of this study to analyze successively the strategic situation in Northeast Asia, China, Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific with a view to finding more effective policies and strategies for peace, stability and prosperity.

Geography, History and Growing Importance of the Region.

The starting point for any study such as this must be the basic facts of geography, historical experience, and the growing importance of the region. It is far more complex than Europe. The land mass of continental East Asia includes the eastern portion of the Russian Federation, China, and the nation-states of Southeast Asia. The off-shore island states of Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines and Indonesia are integral parts of East Asia. The Russian Far East -- as distinct from Siberia and Central Asia -- is the thinly-populated part

the Bering Straits and 2000 miles west from Vladivostok to Irkutsk.

Vladivostok is more than 8000 miles distant from Moscow or St. Petersburg, the heart of Russia. In size, China must be regarded as a continent, roughly comparable to the United States. In Southeast Asia, Thailand for example, is larger than any European state except Russia. The east to west length of Indonesia is comparable to the distance from San Francisco to the Bahamas.

The Pacific extends from the Aleutians and the Kuriles in the north to Australia and New Zealand in the south. From east to west it reaches from Acapulco, Los Angeles and Vancouver through the South China Sea to the tip of Sumatra and the coast of Burma. From San Francisco to Singapore is twice the distance from New York to Moscow. The Pacific is twice the size of the Atlantic. Covering over 63 million square miles, it is the world's busiest commercial highway. Its fish are the staple food of a billion people and the search for oil beneath its surface may be the most dangerous source of tomorrow's international rivalry.

In calculating the effects of geography on national security, diversity is at least as important as size as a complicating factor. The nation-states of East Asia and the Pacific vary in power and prestige all the way from the tiny island states of the mid-Pacific to the larger states topped by Russia, China and Japan. Some states have been around for a long time, others have only recently emerged. Some are rich in resources, others are poor. Some have produced world leaders, others are practically unknown. Although political influence in international relations flows from military or economic power,

equality before the law in the conduct of its diplomacy.

The diversity in the social make-up of each nation constitutes the greatest challenge to future security in East Asia and the Pacific. The region is home to more than 2 billion people, varying greatly in life styles, culture and levels of achievement. Differences in ethnic and religious roots, gaps in the standard of living and antagonisms in social and political loyalties have torn nations apart for centuries. These truths will become more evident as the political microscope passes from country to country.

The innate cultural differences separating individuals or social groups have been aggravated by their historical experience. In the Russian Far East, people are grievously divided not only by the scars of Russian imperialism but also by the lingering effects of Stalinism and the collapse of the Soviet Union. China is incredibly complex. Although 90 percent of its people (the Han Chinese) are bound together by a common language and a common cultural heritage, the other 10 percent (primarily in the border areas) differ substantially in ethnic and religious roots. A wide economic gap separates the residents of the eastern seacoast from those of the interior provinces. The term "revolution" conjures up vastly different images in Beijing and Taiwan, and who knows what struggles will follow in mainland China after Deng Xiaoping. The approach to security problems on the part of all Chinese, however, is irrevocably conditioned by their historical grievances against the outside world.

quarrels. Indonesia, Brunei and Malaysia are Muslim; Singapore is Chinese; the Philippines is Christian; while Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam are Buddhist. Southeast Asians speak a Babel of tongues, with more than 70 dialects identified in the Philippines alone. All the Southeast Asian states except Thailand are recent creations and they share a common resentment against the indignities of their colonial heritage. They now act on the promise that politics stop at the water's edge. Only the government in power (not some minority or pretender) has the right to make official pronouncements on policy. No outsider, no matter how strong or influential, has any right to mess in the internal politics. No Southeast Asian state will ever again accept a second class status.

Now, approaching the twenty-first century, no one in the United States or elsewhere would need to be reminded of the great and growing importance of East Asia and the Pacific in resolving global issues of war and peace. It is not necessary to create an image of a "Pacific Century" as though the region were going to be the strategic center of tomorrow's world. It is essential, however, to recognize that national interests in East Asia and the Pacific are just as vital as those in Europe or Latin America. Since security problems in Asia merit their own priority, they can no longer be tackled on the basis of Europe First or Latin America first.

Beyond Containment

As long as the cold war persisted, it was perceived as a global confrontation between the "Communists" and the "Free World". Neither

once geopolitical, ideological and political. From a geopolitical point of view, it was between a group of like-minded, heavily armed group of nation states and an equally strong aggregation of powers headed by the United States. Ideologically, it was socialism versus the free market and material incentives. In its political aspect, the heart of the confrontation was assumed to be tyranny or totalitarianism in opposition to the democratic way of life. No one in the Free World needed to know anything about the enemy beyond the label of "communism". The single requirement for national security was the containment of "communism".

The cold war in Asia lacked the precise parameters of the cold war in Europe. In Europe the combined forces of NATO stood eyeball to eyeball against the armies of the Warsaw Pact. It was easy to locate the Iron Curtain. In Asia it was entirely different. There were no united forces of the Free World. Military defense was left to the Americans with only such support as their allies were willing to give. There was no NATO -- only a collection of bilateral treaties between the United States and each individual ally. There was no common ideology or no common style of governance. Whenever the United Nations became involved in Asian conflicts -- as in Korea -- it was usually in response to American manipulation.

The communist side in Asia was nearly as fragmented as its opponents. China was the wild card. At times China was in step with Soviet Union, at other times China treated its Soviet ally with scorn and derision. The two communist powers did not act in unison in either Korea or Vietnam, and they were constant rivals for leadership of the Third World. Their alliance

Stalin nor Khrushchev ever liked Mao Zedong, nor did Gorbachev or Yeltsin have any personal interest in Deng Xiaoping. No one could call "socialism" or "communism" of China, Vietnam or North Korea a common ideology. The juche of Kim Il-sung bore no resemblance to Deng Xiaoping's "socialism with Chinese characteristics". The ideological factor was at best a minor cause of cooperation or conflict in Asia. Each communist state created a Leninist type of government but it was rooted in indigenous soil. Nationalism was far too strong to think of the communist world as monolithic.

Some states in Asia -- India, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Kampuchea -- chose to be uncommitted in the cold war. They would not cast their lot unreservedly with either side. They were not neutral in thought nor cowardly in action. They simply chose to be independent and they joined with the uncommitted of Africa and Latin America in a global Non-Aligned Movement.

In the time of the cold war, the superpowers managed to avoid the ultimate nuclear confrontation. They indulged in an expensive arms race and kept the world in a constant fear of impending doom. The Soviets, on their side, based their policies on a combination of military power, bluster, and diplomatic skill. In Asia, they ruled their Far East with an iron hand and maintained alliances with Mongolia, North Korea and Vietnam. They kept substantial forces along the Chinese border (more than fifty divisions) and installed long range missiles capable of delivering nuclear war heads upon the United States. They claimed their army was ready to challenge the Americans for the control of the North Pacific.

The Americans, on their side, depended upon a strong military establishment, forward deployment of forces, overseas bases, a supportive economy and the cooperation of valued allies. All measures for security were subordinated to the military and political requirements of deterrence or survival should preventive measures fail. The Americans pursued successive defense strategies variously labeled massive retaliation, flexible response, mutually assured destruction and reasonable deterrence. Basically, the uneasy peace of the cold war in Asia was preserved by the balance of terror, that is, by mutual appreciation of the horrible consequences of all-out war.

It took three wars -- Korea, Vietnam and Gulf -- to move beyond containment. More conflicts of interest than ever were brought to light in Asia, but the evidence was convincing that it would take more than military methods to solve them. Korea ended in stalemate, Vietnam resulted only in frustration, and the Gulf proved that military victory was not sufficient to solve the issues that led to fighting in the first place.

While the superpowers were locked in battle, they could not give adequate attention to the great revolutions that were at the same time giving rise to an entirely new way of life. The revolutions in science and technology, in transportation and communication, and in information affected the relationship between the powers, forced a reassessment of the relative value of military and economic factors and gave a new meaning to security.

issues of war and peace would no longer be settled by the superpowers. The strength of the Soviet Union had evaporated. The Warsaw Pact was dissolved and all of Eastern Europe was engulfed in reform. Communism as an economic theory was thoroughly discredited. The Russian Federation became the successor to the Soviet Union. The territorial integrity of Russia in Asia was by no means assured. Russia's national economy was in ruins and its political future in doubt. Its nuclear capability was intact but much of its arsenal was for sale. Its Pacific fleet was rusting away and much of its army was demobilized, dispirited, unemployed and homeless.

The balance of power in Asia had taken monumental twists and turns. Japan, though weak militarily, became an economic giant. Rising from the ashes of World War II, and practically without material resources, it took advantage of the skills and energies of its hardworking people to construct Asia's strongest economy. Being spared of the costs of its own defense due to the American alliance, it became a leader in all three of the basic revolutions. Japanese multinationals, particularly in automobiles and electronics, became prominent in every corner of the globe.

Japan was followed closely and quickly in these new economic directions by the four tigers -- the Republic of Korea, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Hong Kong and Singapore. Their future was to be built upon economics, not primarily upon their armed forces. As if by magic, Indonesia and Thailand came to be included in the Newly Industrialized Economies. These nation-states of Asia registered the fastest growing GNPs in the world. Then China, after the Tienanmen incident, rose to the top among Asia's

keep pace with its economic growth. All of the major powers in Asia found their voices in world affairs and demanded that they be heard.

The ups and downs of the cold war produced the greatest change in the role of the United States as the sole surviving superpower in the East Asia Pacific region. From military, economic and political standpoints, the United States still stood tall above the others but it no longer enjoyed the dominance it once possessed. Although its military supremacy was beyond dispute, the limitations on that military power could not be overlooked. The Korean "police action" led only to stalemate, and the Vietnam "hostilities" ended in frustration. The lightning victory in the Gulf War did not drive Saddam Hussein out of office while conflicts in other parts of the world -- Bosnia, Somalia, Haiti -- only demonstrated the truism that non-military issues cannot be solved by military methods. Without the threat of the Soviet enemy, the need for overwhelming military supremacy was sharply reduced.

Because of budgetary stringency, the Americans were obliged to downsize their forces and to withdraw from some of their overseas bases. When the navy pulled out of Subic Bay, it was painful for the Americans. It prompted many Asians to ask whether the Americans might not reasonably decide to cut back their Asian commitments. Because it was no longer the rich man's paradise as portrayed by Hollywood, the United States might be tempted to reduce its assistance programs and pay more attention to collective security, arms control and burden sharing.

maladjustments at home, it was clear at the end of the cold war that Americans suffered from increasing evidences of unemployment, poverty and crime. The steady decline in the American share of global economic activity resulted in ever-mounting budgetary deficits and negative trade balances. The United States was transformed from the world's greatest creditor nation to the world's greatest debtor nation.

Although it was clear that the Soviets were losers in the cold war, it was less evident that the Americans were winners. The cold war was not a zero sum game. The Americans too were losers. The costs of defense borne by the Americans contributed to the wounding of the American psyche. Many Asians felt that Americans lost a great deal of their claim to moral authority. American society had deteriorated to the extent that the image in Asia of the American way of life was seriously damaged. What Asians saw of the wars on their TVs was not pleasant watching. The daily viewing of CNN or the network news showed more than they cared to know about racism, drugs and violence on the streets. They were inclined to think that Americans had become too preachy without any justification for being so.

The passing of the cold war caused the Americans to raise new questions about the efficacy of their political relationship with former allies, friends and enemies. Why distinguish "friends and enemies" and why not seek friendly relations with all states? The old distinctions based on communism or democracy were no longer relevant. Today's "friends" can conceivably become tomorrow's "enemies" and today's enemies -- as well as the non-aligned -- can be included tomorrow in the category of friends.

promote peace and prosperity for all.

As the United States plans its national security at the turn of the Century, the possibility of a Pax Americana is out of the question, primarily because the American people themselves have neither the desire nor the pocketbook to bring it about. a policy of disengagement is also impossible. Every administration, Republican or Democrat, reaffirms that the United States is a Pacific power and is in Asia to stay. With its military and economic power, it cannot escape the responsibilities of leadership for stability and prosperity on the other side of the Pacific. By no means impartial in its diplomacy, the United States is the most trusted, or the least hated, of the major powers. It is looked upon as keeping some Asians from cutting other Asians' throats or as providing a sense of safety and security without superiority. Its navy is not suspected as a cover for imperialistic ambitions but is welcomed as a distant balancer of power. Asians do not worry that the United States will go too far in Asia; they worry that the Americans might pack up and go home.

It may be that the time has come to make and agonizing reappraisal (as John Foster Dulles phrased it) of the costs and benefits of each Treaty of Mutual Defense of Mutual Cooperation that the United States has concluded with each ally. The existing agreements are not ordinary treaties of alliance based on reciprocal obligations. They are one-sided commitments on the part of the United States to come to the defense of a nation threatened by communist aggression. There is no reciprocal commitment on the part of the American "ally"

The American treaties do not constitute a defense system with common institutions and integrated forces. There is no way the allies -- Australia and New Zealand, Japan and the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Philippines -- could be welded together into a coherent system. Their interests are too diverse, their cultural gaps too wide. The only interest they have in common is the central role of the United States in their defense against external attack. The Americans have provided the protective shield while they have concentrated on economic development. For the Americans, it may be that a return to the old system of Treaties of Navigation, Amity and Commerce with everybody would be preferable to what some perceive as permanent or entangling alliances.

Some of the allies of the United States, on their own part, might also be ready for a change. They never did share completely the American perception of the communist threat and they chafed under their patron-client relationship. As they watched the world move beyond the cold war, they pondered the possibility of a more self-reliant role for themselves. As they grew in power and stature, they discounted the value of being hitched to the American star in their quest for national security.

Re-thinking Security

This is not a new world in which the current quest for security is being conducted but an old world which has reemerged from the shell in which for four decades it has been encased. East Asia may have been relieved from the danger of a nuclear clash but it bristles with local conflicts rooted in suspicion

a new opportunity to reappraise its interests, re-assess its threats and devise new and appropriate strategies to achieve its objectives. No nation can do as it pleases. Every right and privilege it claims for itself, must be limited by the corresponding rights and privileges as claimed by its adversaries.

No nation ever feels safe from all possible threats. None ever thinks it has enough security. Each is the sole judge of its needs and expects its adversaries to look out for themselves. What one nation sees as self-defense, its foes interpret as aggression. In the absence of a rule of law, or accepted standards of right and wrong, it has usually been the strongest who gets his way.

The nations of Asia have their own value system and their own strategic culture which they want to protect. Whereas we in the West talk about freedom, democracy, the free market and the bill of rights, Asians list loyalty to the family, respect for authority and welfare of the group as taking precedence over the rights of the individual. Any fruitful discussion of security issues must take due account of these differences in points of view.

The perception of “national security” is subject to continuous modification. Once it was interpreted primarily in political and military terms, but the experience of the cold war years has brought to the fore the importance of socio-economic factors. The survival of nations and their way of life is endangered far more by economic issues and social maladjustment than by the threat of military aggression.

neglected or underestimated. A “loaded gun counts for more than a fat purse”. Some states are still in the hands of what US Secretary of Defense William Perry refers to as “rouge” governments. Unreconstructed Communists in positions of authority, retain their faith in their dogma. For the low estate to which they have fallen, they blame human frailty or faulty execution of orders. No one on either side of the Pacific can feel absolutely secure as long as enormous stockpiles of nuclear weapons and long range missiles are in existence and human hands are on the button.

On the other hand, lasting security demands more than a mighty military establishment. The more a nation arms, the more it inspires potential foes to respond in kind. The result so far has been a standoff between potential for overkill and national bankruptcy. Furthermore, the causes of insecurity have increasingly been shown to be intractable to military measures.

The socio-economic factors in national security came to the forefront in Asia during the cold war years. The United States shouldered most of the bills for common defense while the Asian nations concentrated on economic development. Japan, the four tigers, the Newly Developed Economies and eventually China became serious economic rivals of the United States. As others prospered, the United States sank deeper in debt. It was only natural that the United States should demand more burden sharing for the costs of defense and seek a more level playing field for its international trade. Serious arguments followed as old friends in military relations became rivals in economics

Economically, the whole region sprang to life. Ideological quarrels were put on the back burner as communists and non-communists plunged into the competition for profits. It became abundantly clear that communism as a way of life was no match for democracy and free enterprise on the path to prosperity. The North-South debate between the Third World and the "advanced countries" intensified as the gap between them widened. The more progressive of the LDCs (Less Developed Countries) with their new designation as NIEs (Newly Industrialized Economies) encountered growing difficulties in relations with their overseas trading partners and in their regional rivalries. The economic arguments between the advanced countries overshadowed political differences as they struggled to maximize their advantages in the modern version of the classical competition for overseas markets and sources of raw materials. As the socio-economic revolutions in technology and communication strengthened the role of the multinationals, a very thin line came to separate politics and economics as dominating factors in the quest for national security.

A few examples will suffice to indicate the nature and scope of socio-economic threats to national security throughout the entire region as the twenty first century approaches.

In the remaining LDCs the most frequent complaints are that they are neglected, exploited or abused. In this view, they no longer receive substantial economic and security assistance because their support in the cold war is unnecessary. As their population explodes they sink deeper in poverty. They are exploited for their cheap labor. They are too poor to attract overseas

Because their governments are usually in the hands of autocrats, any economic progress is likely to lead to more demands for political freedom and thus greater domestic instability. Whether because of the avarice of their own authorities or the greed of foreign entrepreneurs, their people stand helplessly by as their rain forests are cut down or their lands or offshore waters are used as dumps for toxic waste. Such combinations of political and economic woes as these help to account for the floods of refugees and illegal immigrants in other states.

The NIEs in Asia feel that a large share of their security concerns is a consequence of economic injustice. They also feel too weak in comparison with the stronger nations of the west to attempt to use political means to attempt to redress the economic imbalance. Being in different stages of modernization, their rivalry is intense to attract the capital and know-how essential for their development programs. Economic conflicts between borrowers and lenders are unavoidable. The Asian borrower is usually an individual or interest group which must first obtain its government's backing. For that the borrower must pay dearly. In his joint venture with the foreign investor, he will pull every string he can to maximize his share of the profits. The investor, aware of the risks of operating in an alien environment, must insure that his contract will be honored and that his capital and profits can be repatriated. Too often he might feel tempted to play politics to get the partner he prefers, or to offer a bribe or two. In an environment where operational disagreements are the order of the day, economic arguments are bound to lead to frayed tempers and political reprisals.

Pacific now is the shift in importance from containment to economics first. This shift began with the Nixon shocks in the early '70s when the commercial world practically abandoned the Bretton Woods system. Until then a reasonable balance in international trade and finance was maintained. No one complained of the high cost of security because of the reality of the threat from the Soviet Union, this changed with the advent of Gorbachev.

With the eclipse of Soviet power, the sense of clear and present danger tended to disappear. The Americans, however, piled up huge budgetary deficits and negative balances in the international income account while carrying the heaviest burden of the common defense. Europeans prospered, Asian economies boomed, while the Americans suffered. The disproportionate costs in lives and money of the Gulf War made it abundantly manifest to all concerned that it was time to make a brand new assessment of the general security situation.

In 1991 the distinguished scholars and statesmen of the Williamsburg Conference made this report on "The Need for a More Complex Conception of Security":

All the societies in the region ... are in the vortex of a revolution arising from the incredible pace of socio-economic change. In light of this, security cannot be defined solely by reference to prosaic inter-state military relations. The Leninist states are trying to find a formula to allow for the flexibility needed for development with the discipline needed for stability. Similarly, the democratic states are experiencing the difficulty of governability in an increasingly pluralistic society. Furthermore, the pressure stemming from

strategies and at different levels of development creates enormous tension. In this situation, security must be seen as starting at home. Even in the case of the United States, for those living in urban centers, security has more to do with whether it is safe to go out at night than with a foreign military threat. In addition, the threat perception for much of the American public is economic and relates not just to Japan but to the NIEs and the ASEAN four. These differing threat perceptions illustrate the need to conceptualize security in a new and complex manner.

The Current Scene

In analyzing the current problems of national security in East Asia and the Pacific, these basic assumptions must be kept in mind. Fundamentally, the problems of war, peace and prosperity are global. They cannot be addressed in any single region without reference to causes and effects in the rest of the world.

East Asia and the Pacific may be considered as a distinct geographic region but it is a composite of different nationalities. People never think of themselves as East Asians, or Pacific Islanders, but rather as Japanese or Chinese, Koreans or Filipinos, or perhaps Thais or Indonesians. Because their loyalties are to their own kind, their friendships and their animosities are strong. The sense of nationalism, however blurred, is the strongest tie binding diverse social groups into a common political unit. The nation-state is still the core of the international system.

hydrofoils and jet planes have annihilated old perceptions of time and distance. Telephones, fax machines and VCRs have revolutionized organizational structures and methods of doing business. The instantaneous communication of intelligence and information have produced new instruments of power challenging the grip that kings or presidents and their generals have long held on the processes of war and diplomacy.

In this study as will be seen, conflicts of interest are analyzed by subregions beginning with Northeast Asia. Russia still insists that its interest in the Far East are vital. It resents any assumption that it is finished as a great power or that its territorial integrity is open to question. It is not willing to abandon the Kuriles in spite of its desperate need for such economic assistance as Japan could provide. The Russian people may be down and out but their national pride is undiminished.

To Japan, the national interest in Northeast Asia is paramount. The old cliché is still true that Korea is like a dagger pointing at the heart of Japan. The Sea of Japan and the East China Sea are no longer “protective moats to the blessed isles” of Japan. The last indignity suffered by Japan as a result of World War II is the Russian occupation of the Northern Islands and there is not likely to be any lasting peace in Northeast Asia until that problem is solved. Japan has substantial power to defend itself (undoubtedly nuclear capability) but it is uneasy in spirit as long as the Russian fleet and missiles are so close to home. Japan is vulnerable to destruction, and perhaps to invasion. It is more important for Japan to secure to the maximum extent

perceives as its rightful place in the world at large.

China's interests in Northeast Asia are equally vital. It will not stand idly by in the face of any threat to its homeland which stretches through Manchuria to the borders of Siberia and Korea. The exact frontiers have never been marked, but are topics of peaceful negotiation. China's diplomatic objectives in Northeast Asia are limited to stability and peace, which China sees as essential to its national development. China has welcomed such multilateral economic projects as the development of the Tumen River Basin.

The decisive new element in the future of security in Northeast Asia is the role to be played by the Koreans themselves. Their country is no longer the subject of a great power to be moved about as a pawn on a chessboard. They are one nation but two systems. The problem of unification is elusive and the danger of nuclear proliferation in the north has put the western world on edge. All parties have an overall interest in the peaceful solution of these issues on the Korean peninsula.

The North Korean situation offers an unusual opportunity for regional peace making. Russia and China have taken the first steps in cross recognition by restoring normal relations with South Korea. The Framework Agreement between the United States and North Korea is a significant step toward normalization in relations between the United States and its ally Japan with North Korea. The Framework Agreement spells out a reasonable program for settling the complicated issue of nuclear non-proliferation

divide North and South. It presents an opportunity for all parties to look beyond the threats and potential crises to the possibility of using the Korean situation as a catalyst for a regional arrangement addressing such conflicts of interest as the Russo-Japan impasse over the Kuriles and the security misunderstandings between the United States and China.

Since the end of the Cold War in Southeast Asia, the quest for security has undergone changes comparable to those in the Northeast. As long as the fighting continued in Vietnam, the other nation-states of Southeast Asia found common cause with the United States against the threat of communism. As time passed, they succeeded in putting down their own insurgencies and in developing their economies with programs of their own choice. For their mutual protection, they were encouraged to organize ASEAN if only to get to know each other better. They found in their regional organization an effective means of supplementing their own national strength and enhancing their prestige. Suspicious of China and Japan, and not too comfortable with their neighbors Australia and India, they promoted the idea of a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) for their collective security but that turned out to be far less dependable than the benign presence of the American fleet.

The member states of ASEAN (Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei) have not only achieved spectacular success but have become self-reliant and assertive in the solution of their security problems. As heirs of imperial rivalry, they are still suspicious and distrustful of one another. Everyone of them is embroiled in a boundary

interests complicates the process of consensus-building. Indonesia and Thailand differ substantially in their perceptions of the potential threat from China; the Philippines and Indonesia react differently to Japan; while Malaysia and Indonesia start from different premises from Thailand and the Philippines in their assessments of the United States.

The economic rivalries within ASEAN are intense. The standards of living of member states are growing but for the most part are still on the low side. Their economies are similar, and they are all driven by export-promotion. Their competition for foreign investments keeps their interest rates high and their labor costs low. They have not been able to reach agreement on genuine free trade or a regional common market. In spite of interdependence and the prevalence of multi-nationals, their competitive struggles are as bitter as ever.

With regard to the military aspects of security, the armed forces of Southeast Asian states are no longer limited to police work but are professionalized to protect their respective countries against aggression from the outside. They are subjected to civil control but in Thailand and Indonesia they have assumed a high degree of political and economic power. Southeast Asian states have 10 million men under arms. They spend more than \$100 billion annually with increases of 25% per year. Their greatest source of supply has been the United States to date where they have obtained the best concessional terms. They are now in the market for the best conventional arms, ships, airplanes and missiles at the cheapest price, which now may mean purchasing from China, Russia, France or Eastern Europe. Fortunately,

measures and to conduct military exercises than to resort to threat or use of force.

ASEAN itself has been exemplary in exploring multilateral paths to peace and understanding. It has reached out to include the rest of Southeast Asia in its fold. Vietnam is well on its way to membership; Laos as usual is laggard; Kampuchea is in the throes of civil chaos; and Burma has not made up its mind if it wants to join the modern world. The welcome mat is out for all to join ASEAN in due course.

For multilateral help in solving their economic problems, the members of ASEAN have turned to APEC and to GATT, and they are toying with Prime Minister Mahatir's proposal for an exclusive East Asia Economic Caucus. They have adopted joint procedures for maritime safety and for combatting smuggling, piracy and the drug traffic.

The most interesting steps in the direction of multilateralism has been taken by ASEAN's Post Minister's Conference (PMC). Originally the Foreign Ministers met annually to discuss their mutual problems. Then they discovered that it made sense to invite as dialogue partners (the United States, Australia and Japan) because of their economic interests in the region. Then the PMC decided to include China and Russia as guests. Eventually the states of Indochina were invited as observers and all categories attended the first of what was conceived to be an annual meeting of an Asia Regional Forum (ARF). The first meeting of the ARF was limited to one session of three hours, during which time all the representatives of eighteen nations

so all-inclusive as to be meaningless, invitations were also extended to NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations), academics, private interests and distinguished persons. These are ambitious multilateral steps but they are clearly in line with Churchill's observation, "Jaw, jaw is better than war, war.".

Because of its immensity, China must be treated as a separate sub-region of East Asia. Its future is the key to peace from Siberia to Singapore. With its millennia of experience, the quality of its culture and civilization must be recognized. It has evolved from a unique society to one of the major nation-states of the contemporary world. The entire communist period in China is only a degree on the long thermometer of Chinese history.

There is no question about China's growth in economic and military power. The World Bank suggests its GNP may rival that of the United States by 2020. Its army is the largest in the world. Its navy does not yet have blue water capability but it can protect China's coastline. It has long range missiles and nuclear capability. A repetition of the unequal treaties or the Japanese invasion is entirely out of the question. China has come to terms with its past, asking nothing more except peace and stability so that it can continue on the path of its own modernization.

China's major problems are domestic. Above all is the matter of its territorial integrity. It is pleased with the recovery of Hong Kong, but the future of Taiwan is tantalizing. China is not covetous of neighboring lands which are home for many overseas Chinese. There is no reason to believe

along the Amur, in Central Asia or in the South China Sea.

China's greatest challenge is to preserve its own society. How can China provide jobs to govern and feed 1.2 billion people? How can Chinese authorities balance the needs of society with individual rights in administering a country equal in size and with more than twice the population of all Europe? How can they balance old traditions with the looming freedoms of the 21st Century, especially when those freedoms are equated with "spiritual pollution". The Chinese do not believe that western-style democracy and the free market are their wave of the future. Looking beyond "socialism with Chinese characteristics", they want to design and fulfill their own destiny. All they ask is that there shall not be war along the way.

Of the three subregions of East Asia, China is perhaps the least understood by the United States. Today's China is a far cry from the China of a hundred years ago. The United States means no more no less to China today than China means to the United States. The United States is the "Middle Kingdom" of the Americas; China is the "Middle Kingdom" of the Asians. As equal sovereigns they will share in the shaping of tomorrow's world.

The Special Role of the United States.

In shaping the strategic environment in East Asia and the Pacific in tomorrow's world, the United States cannot avoid the responsibilities that flow from its predominant power position. Its military might, amply

purchasing power of the American consumer has been the engine for driving the prosperity of the Asian nations. The American mastery of high technology together with its leadership along the information highway is likely to preserve its position as the world's only genuine superpower for the foreseeable future.

It is within this global framework that the national interests and strategies pertaining to Asia must be defined and continuously reappraised. For a democracy such as the United States this is not easy. Political parties thrive on contentious ideas and rival interest groups battle for control of foreign policy. Detroit wants protection against foreign cars, California drivers want cheap and dependable cars no matter where they come from. The National Manufacturers Association likes NAFTA, the AFL-CIO opposes it. It makes sense to say that the United States must protect and promote American interests, but the problem is "whose interests". What helps some Americans, hurts some others.

While directing some attention to problems in Asia, the United States cannot lose sight of its problems at home and in such other regions as Latin America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Unemployment, AIDS, drug control and crime on the streets must take precedence over down sizing the armed forces or erasing the trade deficit. News headlines or daily broadcasts are much more likely to feature Haiti, Boris Yeltsin, Bosnia or Somalia than the issues that present the United States with the most difficult challenges and the greatest opportunities for stability and peace in Asia.

"What are the best strategies to be followed in protecting American interests?". Each sub region has its own quota of special problems. For example, in Northeast Asia:

How far should Yeltsin be encouraged and supported?

What if Yakutia or Sakhalin should declare independence?

Are any modifications in order in treaty relations
with Japan? What about trade relations?

Can the U.S. more effectively promote unification of Korea?

Should troops in Northeast Asia be further downsized?

Should further multilateral diplomatic processes be
encouraged?

In Southeast Asia:

What "places not bases" agreements should be sought
to compensate for loss of Clark Field and Subic Bay?

What further support for ASEAN is merited?

What strategies are in order in dealing with Vietnam,
Laos and Kampuchea? Also with Burma?

Are further adjustments in order for ANZUS relations?

In China:

Is the U.S. sufficiently tough in trade negotiations?

Are U.S. interests protected in the course of Mainland-
Taiwan negotiations?

Should there be more or less emphasis on democracy and
human rights in China relations?

How can U.S. strategies be improved in dealing with non-
proliferation and other security issues?

As has been learned from the past, the answers to such questions will please some, antagonize others. The United States cannot worry about criticism, but simply follow Shakespeare's admonition, "to thine own self be true". The casualties of two wars--Korea and Vietnam--were a heavy price to pay for the shortcomings of the past. The mission now of the United States is to lead in reduction of tensions, resolution of conflicts and avoidance of war. Lasting security does not lie in an upward spiral of arms development, fueled by mutual suspicion, but in a commitment to joint survival. If each nation takes into account the security anxieties of others, seeks to implement confidence- building measures and maximize the benefits of cooperation, East Asia can indeed be transformed from the cockpit of conflict that it was in Cold War to a model region for peace and prosperity in the 21st Century.